

A stylized, high-contrast black and white illustration. On the right side, a large quill pen is shown, its feathered shaft extending from the bottom right towards the top right. In the bottom left corner, there is an inkwell with a dark liquid inside and a small, round object, possibly a galleypiece or a seal, resting on the surface next to it. The background is filled with dense, diagonal hatching lines that create a textured, almost wood-grain-like effect. The overall style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a high-contrast linocut.

"... I do not believe that the fate of any given small town will be decided by its location in the state, or its access to water or highways or resources, or other objective characteristics. These factors can help or hurt economic survival.

"But the essential ingredient is something human, unpredictable, and immeasurable. It is that elusive thing we call leadership.

"Leadership is vision—some notion of where the future lies and how to get there. Leadership is guts—the willingness to step up to hard decisions, take risks, step on toes, and maybe to fall flat on your face in trying. Leadership is energy—the determination to keep going when everyone tells you it's a lost cause. Leadership is looking in the mirror and saying, 'It's up to me . . . '

"... You do not have to be elected to be a leader. You just have to care and decide to do something, and to enlist like-minded people in the doing. In my view, that's what small towns need to survive: the spark of leadership by committed local people willing to risk failure to reach for success. . . "

—from an editorial in the Des Moines Register
by James P. Gannon, editor